

Peripheralisation: A Politics of Place, Affect, Perception and Representation

ABSTRACT

Recently scholars have started to consider the persistence of peripheries in relation to how they are represented by others outside of the region. Drawing on Foucauldian knowledge/power processes and forms of 'internal colonialism', powerful core regions construct and reconstruct knowledge about peripheries as a weaker 'other'. However this denies agency to passive, peripheral 'victims', compromising their capacity to contest their peripherality. We challenge this using Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages and the concepts of affect and perception to develop a conceptualisation of power which allows agency to weaker entities. This enables us to develop better tools for improving peripheral development. We use an innovative Public Engagement research method and a case study of Cornwall in the South West of the UK to consider an alternative model with regards to how ideas become accepted and adopted. We claim that analyses of the relationships between core and peripheral regions need to understand the complex cultural assemblages behind regional identities, because this helps us to explore the sites of possibility which offer space for development.

Introduction

The question of why peripheries become or remain peripheral is an enduring one, characterised by two main responses – more orthodox structural approaches drawing on economic and governance themes; and more heterodox approaches that draw on critical theories and philosophies emphasising how spaces are discursively produced. In the former, peripheries underperform economically because of structural reasons such as rurality, poor accessibility, and low levels of innovation, human and social capital. This results in low levels of knowledge and skills in the local economy, and therefore low productivity (Dargan and Shucksmith 2008; Rodriguez-Pose and Crescenzi 2008; Atterton 2007; Lee et al. 2005; Shortall 2004; Murdoch et al. 2003). Policy remedies include addressing infrastructural imbalances; developing communities; improving clusters of

innovative milieu of knowledge and learning; and encouraging inward investment, endogenous growth, and competitiveness (Aula and Harmaakorpi 2008; Pike et al. 2006; Hilpert 2006; Asheim 2012; Kitson et al. 2004; Herschel 2010; Herslund 2012).

But infrastructure can only go some of the way towards explaining why some regions do not respond to injections of infrastructure, and why others develop of their own accord. The dynamics of the neoliberal economic system means that resources are drawn to political and economic centres, leaving peripheries behind and increasingly disadvantaged in the global economy (Lang et al., 2015; Bernt and Liebmann 2013; Komlosy 1998). Understanding how regions are discursively produced helps to meet this gap by incorporating power relationships, neoliberal place-making, and the impacts that what might be construed as negative perceptions of identities can have on regional development. These types of questions grew out of cultural and economic geography following Lefebvre (1991), the New Cultural Geography of Cosgrove (1998), and the New Spatial Orders of David Harvey (2001). This explores how the lived experiences and socio-economic practices of a given population construct the imaginary spaces within which they are situated (see also Soja 1996; Massey 2005; Thrift, 2008; Cresswell 1996; Hetherington 2008; Sibley 1995). The claim here is that social, physical and economic infrastructure only provides a part of the story about what a place is and what it might become in the future. Instead of being the passive victims of circumstance and forces far beyond the region, through their lived experiences ordinary people, businesses, and political actors are active agents in shaping the spaces within which they live, within the political and economic system of which they are a part (Burdack et al. 2015).

In truth, the two approaches intersect in many points. The identities emphasised by the production of place literature provide a mechanism through which knowledge and skills infrastructure can become embedded into economies and local innovation systems (Asheim, 2012), fostering endogenous growth. Identities provide a marketable asset to sell regional products, attract

investment (Hilpert, 2006), and enhance regional competitiveness in national, supranational, and international economic environments (Kitson et al. 2004; Cooke 2002). This reduces identity to an advertising campaign to shape how 'others' should perceive a region.

However, frequently peripheries can find themselves described in ways that reinforce dependency through characterisation as 'stagnant', 'backward', or as agents of their own economic misfortune (Bosworth and Willett 2011; Vepsäläinen and Pitkänen 2010; Galani-Moutafi 2013; Bryce 2012, Eriksson 2008; Jansson 2003; Murdoch and Lowe 2003). Bürk, Kühn and Somner (2012) use 'stigma' to describe this, denoting how some regions can become marked as 'spoiled'. Invoking the labelling of Howard Becker (1997), the stigmatisation of peripheries attacks the individual and collective identities of local residents, who become marked with the stereotypes of the underperforming. Over the course of time these stigmatised stereotypes can become internalised by the local population, who adopt them into local identities, later becoming part of how spaces become produced. In a challenge to structural approaches to regional development, physical and intangible infrastructure is not enough to explain the persistence of peripheries. With echoes of Fannon's Post-colonialism (2008), peripheries become or remain this way because of negative images which affect how core individuals, businesses and organisations interact with the stigmatised periphery, and how peripheries perceive (and therefore reproduce) themselves.

These regional stigmatisations play a specific function in terms of broader national identities. For example, Jansson (2003) documents how the American deep south is constructed with a set of negative characteristics which produce it as a kind of 'internal other' to American national identity, acting as a repository for the racism, violence, and poverty which in practice can be found throughout the United States. Unlike the production of place literature, Othering and Stigmatisation offer us the insight that peripheral identity is not only produced by people within the region, it is also constructed by people outside of it, based on their perception of place. The argument here is

that peripheries remain peripheries because *outsiders* imagine and produce them in ways that are unhelpful to economic dynamism (see also Eriksson 2008).

Useful though these models are, current analyses of the discursive construction of peripheries follow a concept of power which assumes that dominant, powerful, economically strong core regions produce the identities of the weaker periphery. This removes agency from peripheries assuming that they are at the mercy of the dominant cores, lacking the ability to resist negative stereotypes. It takes an overly simplistic perspective on power, overlooking the lived cultural processes in the production of place literature (see Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996; Massey 2005; Thrift, 2008; Cresswell 1996; Hetherington 2008; Sibley 1995). This raises two questions. Firstly, can we find a conceptualisation of power which allows agency back in to peripheral identity construction, and secondly, if we can, how might we operationalise this in peripheral development? In the next part of the paper we take the first question, looking for a more nuanced and dispersed perspective of power which can incorporate perception *and* resistance. We will do this through Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) concept of assemblages. For the second question, we use the case study of Cornwall to explore if peripheries really do challenge core representations of place, and if so, what our conceptualisation of power can add to improve peripheral development.

Knowledge and Power in the Production of Peripheries

In this section, we argue that assemblages provide a conceptual architecture which can acknowledge the possibilities of agency in peripheries. But first, we need to understand more about the operation of knowledge (about peripheries), and power, in current literature. At present, this follows an analysis of power where knowledge about the world is constructed by the powerful for consumption by the majority. Through processes of hegemony and social learning (Gramsci, 1973), and not unlike Said's *Orientalism* (2003), people living in peripheral regions can come to adopt knowledges and

107 'truths' which are harmful to the locality (Jansson 2003; Eriksson 2008; Bürk, Kühn and Somner
108 2012). In a study of Norrland in rural Sweden, Eriksson (2008) claims that urban areas create the
109 categories which present the periphery as an 'internal other', asserting and reinforcing the 'modern'
110 characteristics of Sweden by representing Norrland as rural, backward, and traditional. The effect of
111 this process is that the strong core further weakens the already vulnerable periphery, maintaining
112 and reinforcing relational power differentials and dominating how peripheries are discursively
113 produced.

114
115 This follows a very mechanistic and zero-sum view of power, which is imagined as hoarded and
116 owned by particular groups, creating the dichotomies of the power-full, and the power-less. This
117 risks overlooking the literature about how regions produce themselves (Soja 1996; Massey 2005;
118 Thrift, 2008; Cresswell 1996; Hetherington 2008; Sibley 1995), and misapplies Foucauldian
119 perspectives that peripheralisation studies draw from. Foucault (2008) claims that power is
120 reproduced through discourse, which can be defined as a combination of the language and
121 meanings used to talk about an object, the institutions that support these languages and meanings,
122 and the cultural practices and educational processes that facilitate their reproduction. Discursive
123 power is not 'owned' at any point, by any group but can be accessed and harnessed at all points of
124 the system. He uses the example of repression (the ultimate form of powerlessness) to illustrate
125 that the act of trying to ban or oppress an object or a discourse makes it more visible by ensuring
126 that it is talked about, studied and analysed. This reproduces versions of the truth and creates the
127 spaces where these truths can be resisted. Consequently, the act of exerting power over peripheral
128 knowledge production provides the space to challenge it. Marx's power-less are not powerless at
129 all, but have a range of capacities which can be used to challenge 'the system'. This also means that
130 peripheries do not *have* to accept unhelpful, unflattering or untrue representations on their behalf.
131 Instead, the discursive space for resistance is provided in the act of constructing somewhere as a
132 periphery and assigning negative stereotypes.

133

134 On the one hand, we might feel that Foucault provides us with the analytical tools required to inject
135 the discursive agency that peripheralisation lacks. However, it is less successful at understanding the
136 phenomenological reasons behind why a region might adopt unflattering stereotypes, and which we
137 need to know if we are also to understand how to challenge them. Without this we are left only
138 with power as an analytical framework, limiting our understanding of the *mechanisms* behind
139 peripheral discursive agency. For this, we suggest applying Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) concept of
140 assemblages. In many ways, assemblages neatly overlay Foucauldian discursive formations. They
141 both describe dense networks of deeply interconnected objects, symbols, meanings, institutions,
142 nuances, and narratives which contribute to our knowledges about our worlds; and share a debt to
143 Nietzsche's affirmation (2006). They both see power as coming from a multiplicity of sources, and
144 believe knowledges to be mobile, fluid and unstable; capable of creating new linkages (for Deleuze
145 and Guattari, lines of articulation) with objects or meanings; or developing ruptures between what
146 had previously appeared to be fixed. Consequently, both conceptualisations would agree that
147 regional identities are fluid and temporary, shifting with changing discursive contexts. But Deleuze
148 and Guattari draw on an intellectual lineage which is embedded in the post-Epicurean affective
149 theory of Spinoza, and the phenomenologies of Henri Bergson (2004) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty
150 (2012). This provides them with a metaphorical language that is better adapted for exploring the
151 intricacies of perception and its links with agency at a human, psychological level. In other words, it
152 can offer us the tools for understanding why regions accept, perpetuate, or resist the identities that
153 they do. It also means that whilst for Foucault, discursive formations coagulate around *power*,
154 whilst within the assemblage lines of articulation coalesce around *affect*.

155

156 Affect is the direct link to the temporal capacity of the assemblage, and its helpfulness to the study
157 of peripheralisation. It describes literally how objects, ideas and discourses impact and affect us
158 (Ahmed 2004), creating imperceptible or significant changes. It can relate to physical objects and

structures within our environment, but also to the ideas that we encounter, and which shape our lived worlds. This is temporal because we are also affected by our individual and cultural memories of things, which shapes our perceptions of, and responses to, phenomena that we encounter. Moreover, no thing is too small to have an affect, the impact of which is not proportional to size. Affect can ripple or amplify itself within the assemblage of which it is part (Bennett 2010), or create feedback loops of self-perpetuating affective reactions (Connolly 2008). This occurs when an object, emotion (see Ahmed 2004) or an idea ‘resonates’ with other matter in the assemblage, reverberating in unexpected ways (Connolly 2008). Equally, some affects fail to resonate within the assembled matter and ideas, failing to make a significant impact or affect. Finally, as knowledges shift and mutate, creating new constellations, unimagined spaces of possibility can be opened up, or previously possible opportunities closed down. For Peripheral regions, we might imagine this as that some identities and ideas affect people to a much greater extent than others, or at different times than others. Stigmatising characterisations of place do not *have* to affect a region to a significant degree. Equally, the impact that resisting narratives of place can have, can be out of all proportion to its marginal position if it resonates within the complex layers and constellations of signs, symbolisms or thoughts and feelings.

This mechanism works on two levels. Firstly, it means that dominant discourses do not appear in a vacuum, but must resonate with broader assemblages of culturally produced space. To illustrate, to call a peripheral region ‘dynamic and innovative’ risks rejection and derision when culturally the idea of a rural idyll is strongly present in how the countryside is discursively produced (Horton, 2008). Secondly, in order to accept a particular discourse one needs to be embedded within the emotional affective markers from which a discourse stems (Ahmed, 2004). Emotions provide a bridge between two disparate objects, sliding between them, facilitating the generation of new discourses. To accept the notion of a rural idyll I need to be embedded into an affective assemblage which wraps the rural in warm and fuzzy notions of community, security, and green space. But, in order to

maintain this, drawing on othering I might juxtapose my rural idyll with the modern, urban dynamism that I find stimulating but tiring – constructing the rural in the terms that Eriksson (2008) describes with regards to Norrland, as backward and traditional. These kinds of characterisations then become easier to accept as they resonate with an idyllic type of emotional responses such as safety, security, and comfort. This raises the point that if external actors need to be able to fit representations of place into their socio-cultural schema and what we might call ‘perceptual framework’, so too for internal actors. Peripheral inhabitants do not have to accept the (unflattering) representations that others try to bestow upon them, because for a discourse to become believed and embedded it first needs to resonate with a prior cultural schema.

So far, we can see that affective assemblages can provide a conceptual architecture to embed agency back into peripheral identity construction. But can we apply this to regions per se? Firstly, we need to know that the assemblage is not a monolithic unity, but is made up of other assemblages, and plugs in to further ones. Moreover, although we have been talking about them as ideational, we can also think of them as physical. To illustrate, a region may be imagined as a networked constellation of towns, villages and cities. In turn, these are a multiplicity of layers and textured interactions between institutions, practices, and cultural beliefs within the space (Soja 1996; Massey 2005; Thrift, 2008; Cresswell 1996; Hetherington 2008; Sibley 1995). These elements are themselves assemblages. For example, the assembled practices and ideas developed around a dominant industry or type of activity, which whilst having minimal interaction with some assemblages (let’s say a particular amenity), is deeply interconnected within others. In turn, the region is plugged in to bigger assemblages iesuch as the,–of nation, supra-nation, and global trade and culture (see Delanda 2011).

This provides us with a conceptualisation of power which gives agency to the smallest of actors. Through resonance and affect we can also see how, and why agents may accept stigmatising

narratives, and we have a model which is directly translatable onto how regions might be imagined in the co-production of knowledge constellations. What we now need is to understand whether peripheries really do challenge stigmatising core representations of place, and what our conceptualisation of power can add to improve peripheral development.

Cornwall

Cohering with Eriksson and Jansson, within much academic literature the assemblage of Cornwall is physically and emotionally overdetermined by affective resonators and lines of articulation which reinforce its poverty, dependence, internal otherness, and helplessness (Willett, 2016). It is a rural region with its own language, flag, embedded sense of cultural difference from England and has recently been recognised by the EU as a national minority. Economically it is one of the poorest parts of the UK and Europe, and has received the highest levels of European Structural funding (given to regions with less than 75% EU GDP) for the past 17 years (ERDF Convergence, 2014). Cornwall's economic data consistently places it towards the bottom of UK statistics for earned incomes, Gross Value Added (NOMIS, 2013), and for infrastructural spending (FSB, 2014), reinforcing its peripherality as a part of the UK economy, and which impacts on how local people imagine and produce themselves.

The starting point for how Cornwall is perceived lies in its reputation as a popular tourist area (Hale, 2001), which has helped to ameliorate the decline of the traditional industries of mining, fishing and agriculture. As a direct result of its success as a visitor destination many people from outside of Cornwall have a strong perception of the region (Willett, 2010). This borrows emotional resonators from tourism assemblages, articulating knowledges which create it as 'exotic' (Dickinson, 2008), esoteric (Laviolette, 2003), and 'a land that time forgot' (DuMaurier, 1972). Quite literally, what visitors imagine that they see is 'cloaked' (see Bergson, 2004) by a perceptual lens which seeks to

reinforce what the individual wants to see, based on the assemblages of resonance and knowledges that they draw from. Where local difficulties are acknowledged, they are replayed back through a lens which starts from dependency, and interprets the visitor as supporting a struggling region, thereby reinforcing dependency and otherness (see Eriksson 2008; Fanon 2008).

Economic strategists have long known that these perceptions are problematic for local development, constructing versions of the region as an economic basket case, impeding 'doing business' with other parts of the UK (Willett, 2010). In an attempt to address this, decision makers have pursued the inward investment of knowledge, skills and businesses; often relying on affective resonators derived from Cornwall's rurality and tourism related industries, encouraging inward migration through the high 'quality of life' and excellent lifestyle, which may be experienced in the region (Deacon 2004; Willett 2016).

To help understand these contradictions, we can look deeper into Ahmed's (2004) analysis of affect. Ahmed calls emotional affects 'sticky', because feelings that are generated through objects and discourses 'stick' to those things. Like the sugar deposit from a sweet paper, affect can become transferred between disparate objects. In the case of Cornwall the idealised feelings engendered through the visitor relationships that many have, attaches to the undynamic slowness of the rural idyll, which transfers across onto the social and economic capacity that Cornwall is perceived to have, operating as mask that obscures discursive objects which fail to conform. This mask has meant that regional development decision makers have struggled to see what assets Cornwall has beyond the natural environment and the excellent lifestyle that visitors and residents are imagined to enjoy (Deacon, 2004).

However, we start to sound as if power is unidirectional, and as if it is impossible for ordinary people (as opposed to elites or political representatives) to challenge the assemblages and resonances

which reinforce their peripherality. The next step is to consider how Cornwall is perceived by persons within the region, and the relationship that local people have with peripheralising representational narratives.

Method

The data in this paper comes from an ESRC Festival of Social Science, public engagement event entitled 'The Citizens Takeover of Cornwall Council', held in November 2014. The event was designed to explore how ordinary people *within* Cornwall perceive the region. This represented an attempt to explore lived experiences of social agents in assemblages of Cornwall, within the constraints of our resources available. 30 participants responded to advertisements in the local radio and print media, distributed through email lists, events listings and social media. Two thirds were women, and many, but by no means all, had grown up in Cornwall, and all lived in the region currently. Participants tended to be in the 40+ age category, but fell into a complex range of class demographics and at least half were of retirement age. The event took place in County Hall over the course of a whole Saturday, to ensure that it was accessible to a wide variety of social groups. Children's activities were provided to encourage families to attend. Some participants were already active in local politics – either campaigning about single issues within their communities, or broader environmental campaigns. By nature of the self-selection of voluntary participation, all groups tended to be deeply concerned about aspects of Cornwall's development, but for reasons of class or time, did not form part of 'decision-making classes'. The three elected representatives which attended were also positioned as 'challenging' voices to local strategic decision makers, rather than part of mainstream elites.

The rationale behind conducting the research as a public engagement, workshop style event was two-fold. Firstly, one of the primary benefits of qualitative research lies in its ability to provide rich

data and fascinating and unexpected understandings that closely reflect how individuals perceive the world (Flick, 2004). We do not envisage participants as ‘speaking for Cornwall’, and make no claims to representativeness for either Cornwall or peripheries. Indeed, identity is multi-faceted, and the ‘oppositional’ nature of participants only reflects one aspect of local narratives of place. Instead, we are examining the discourses that participants articulated, in order to explore how it can improve our understanding of power. Instead, the rich data gathered provides an insight into how residents respond to what might be described as a ‘stigmatised’ local economic identity, and provides an alternative conceptual framework through which to explore this stigmatisation. Our challenge lay in finding the conditions within which participants felt comfortable enough to be able to share their thoughts at sufficient depth for us to understand something of the complex plural knowledge constellations within participants’ lifeworlds (see Heras and Tabera, 2014).

We needed to find a way of generating an extended conversation in order to do this. We wanted to reach out to a broader audience than those often attracted by formats such as focus groups. Our solution was to use a Public Engagement research method to capture potential participant’s imagination sufficiently to engage in such an intense discussion. Whilst the literature on public engagement as research is underdeveloped, we anticipated that we would be able to achieve a lively discussion which would help to understand these knowledge constellations (See Orlu-Gul *et al.* 2014). We drew on research methods linked to drama and performance (Heras and Tabera, 2014) to consider creative ways to engage participants beyond standardised forms of questioning, and to involve them in a reflective thought process. Secondly, we felt that a performative research method helps to democratise the research process, legitimising the research findings by ensuring that participants are a part of negotiated co-produced knowledges, rather than filtering their words through academic hierarchies of knowledge (Hinchliffe *et al.* 2014). The risk shared with focus groups was that some voices would come to dominate (Flick, 2004). We addressed this by introducing facilitators to help to ensure that each participant was able to contribute; that

discussions were conducted in a fair and respectful manner; and to probe deeper into points raised. Whilst the conversational style of the workshops facilitated more complex and nuanced understandings, they missed the opportunity to probe individual perspectives at a greater depth.

The event focussed on exploring what participants thought and felt about Cornwall, and what they believed that the future held for them in the region. The 'hook' to generate interest was the development of a 'Citizens Manifesto' which would be presented to 'keynote listeners', drawn from chief executives of various voluntary and public sector service providers; leading Cornwall Councillors; and a local Member of Parliament. In the morning workshop groups discussed their perceptions of Cornwall's past, present, and future, which was presented to the whole group and keynote listeners in the afternoon. Initially this was envisaged as a creative activity using images as a form of memory trigger (Heras and Tabera 2014), but in practice the creative approach did not resonate with how participants wanted to express themselves; and whilst some people engaged directly with the 'story of Cornwall' format, others preferred to start from the concept of perception. Discussions were recorded by the groups on flipchart paper (see figure 1), reflecting a negotiated resolution of groupwork. This formed the basis of the Manifesto that participants negotiated at the start of the afternoon, and took the format of a set of priorities that participants felt needed to be put in place for Cornwall to move forward successfully. Working groups shared their Manifesto ideas in a flipchart-feedback session, before selecting the ideas that would make the final Manifesto. This meant that the content of the Manifesto was discussed, agreed and written by the participants during the event.

The data presented below comes from the workshop flipchart notes, facilitator fieldnotes (which tended to cover generalised observations of the process rather than specific comments), and the Citizens Manifesto. The latter reflects the negotiated priorities arrived at over the course of the event. To analyse, we began by writing up the flipchart work and fieldnotes, which we coded

thematically and presented in a table. Next we constructed a narrative about the themes which arose from the day. A copy of the narrative and table were sent to all participants (using details provided on their consent forms), who were invited to provide their feedback in order to negotiate research findings. We derived the final categories presented here from the negotiated feedback phase of the data collection. Despite this, the assemblages and articulations presented here should not be taken as undisputed nor unities, but represent a multiplicity of articulations around which contested signs, symbols, meanings and institutions congregate.

Findings

The question we now turn to is whether people really do challenge core representations of place, in order to understand how this might be operationalised in future development. For this, we consider the assemblage of Cornwall which emerged from the Citizens Takeover, looking at it through the typology outlined above of symbolisms and ideas generated; phenomenological resonances engendered; lines of articulation created; and possibilities that are opened up. Throughout this process we will consider how this interacts with the more hegemonic narratives outlined earlier.

Cornwall and the challenge to core productions of place

The Citizens Manifesto provides the starting point for our analysis, because although it represented the culmination of the day's activities, it is also a synthesis of the knowledges articulated. These knowledges coagulated around three distinct conceptual themes, representing emotionally affective 'hotspots' within participants' wider assemblages of Cornwall. These were Culture, Environment, and Power – or more often, powerlessness. One might imagine these themes as assembled discourses, which plugged in-to, resonated with, and produced participants' personal assemblages of Cornwall. We were looking for themes that collected together the key symbolic meanings from the

manifesto, and which crucially, resonated with the discussions from the morning. We might also have included the economy and government, but these were deeply interwoven across the thematic assemblages that we encountered. If we imagine the assemblage as a network of complex, overlapping interrelationships, connected by lines of articulation; most of the points making up the manifesto, and much of the material from the earlier discussions are plugged in-to at least one of these themes. Our supporting material is drawn from throughout the event.

To illustrate, the articulation that *'Development should evolve naturally, coming from locally generated planning, based on need, not greed'* was presented as a policy issue, but was located amongst textured and multi-layered memories, ideas and symbolic meanings around concern about the rural and 'natural' environments. This fused with a sense of powerlessness felt by a failure to challenge the imagined 'corporate greed' of specific developments. Equally, the statement that *'Policy tools need to be developed for social outcomes'*, whilst being predominantly a reaction to a sense of powerlessness and a desire for greater community control, had a feedback loop with a perceived necessity for ensuring the sustainability of local culture.

The centrality of culture provided one of the most emotionally charged moments of the day; when supported by a number of others in the room, a participant objected to some language used to describe Cornwall. This risked closing off further discussion in later parts of the workshop, silencing questioning voices. Instead, the opposite happened and people talked about how they understood identity. Culture is woven through Cornwalls assemblage to such an extent that the awkward moment from earlier amplified throughout discussion, generating a complex weave of ideas and meanings. This included debate about the meanings attached to 'Cornishness' ~~meant~~. For example, *'Cornwall is about One and All'* acts as what Delanda (2011) would describe as a relation of interiority, binding the assemblage of together against the tendency of identities to dissipate. In using this ancient motto, it references temporal attachments and emphasises a shared heritage

based on international trade and innovation, whilst at the same time, allowing a means of including newer residents. For others, it is a colourful part of local identity, such as the participant who stated that *'it gives us a lot of character, and it's an expression of who we are'*. Culture also played a role in creating a space of potentiality whereby something 'new' could happen envisioning the future by remembering a time when Cornwall was not peripheral but led the industrial revolution. This is encapsulated in the following response. *'We've got a history of self-reliance, and our mining heritage shows that. We've got to draw on that old independence of spirit'*. We see here that culture is not imagined as a passive object to consume as in core representations of Cornwall (Dickinson, 2008), but is experienced as an active and lived force that shapes how the present and future assemblage of Cornwall will look, as powerlessness slides into potential power.

Although borrowing from a similarly available cultural repertoire, core representations reference an affective register which privileges exoticism. This provides us with an example of where a Deleuzian framework is helpful in our analyses of peripheralisation. Unlike the Cornwall of DuMaurier (1972), and the romanticised 'land that time forgot', the assemblages of participants do not coalesce around 'quirkiness', or 'exoticism'. Where it risks bumping into the exotic, it recoils and reinterprets these symbolisms to present a more active, rather than passive, appearance. Instead, it foregrounds a utilitarian set of meanings to cultural resonances which seeks to fit 'useful' characteristics to articulations of culture. Indeed, an assemblage that coalesced around and was energised by Cornish culture for utilitarian gains, was used to maximise its support from European Union structural funds (Willett, 2013). More recently, the assertion of a Cornish cultural assemblage was instrumental in the region developing the governance institutions necessary for the 2015 grant of a Devolution Deal from central government. Arguably this improves regional visibility at a national policy level, using a cultural powerlessness as an impetus for creating change, developing new spaces of potentiality for local agents. However, the 'exotic' and 'utilitarian' assemblages around Cornish culture are not

418 mutually complementary, and the acceptance of either requires the abandonment of something
419 deep in the imagination of self or other.

420 The natural environment and landscape emerged as another conceptual theme that assembled a
421 distinct group of discursive productions of the region, and is encapsulated in the quote that Cornwall
422 *'has a very green and eco image'*. This was formed from two smaller assemblages. One was built on
423 a constellation of emotional attachment to rurality, and desire to protect the rural environment
424 from the real threat imagined to come from over-development. *'Cornwall's been sold out*
425 *underneath us'*. Identity, community and the environment is bound together and imagined as under
426 threat and vulnerable to destruction. Individuals and communities are powerless to challenge these
427 movements because of distant national level planning structures which are imagined to place the
428 balance of power with corporate interests. But the second congregation of ideas imagines the
429 environment as a site of possibility for positive change. The Citizens Manifesto was infused with
430 possibilities for challenging disempowering hierarchies and developing a more environmentally
431 sustainable and resilient future, encouraging local food and renewable energy production, circular
432 economies, and incorporating nature into definitions of wellbeing. *'If we could get a land use policy*
433 *that's more localised, we could look after the environment and support local growers, and it would*
434 *be a win-win for the economy too'*. Threats to the environment become a source of power and
435 energy, built on an affective register of productivity, but in an economy which places an ethical value
436 on the natural landscape.

437 Core constructions of Cornwall tend to gather ideas, objects and symbolisms which see the
438 environment in terms of its amenity as a green space. Often this fuses with, resonates around, and
439 amplifies from symbolisms and discourses around the rural idyll (Dickinson 2008; Willett 2010).
440 Here, the importance of the landscape lies in the enjoyment and pleasure that can be derived from
441 its consumption and commodification. This denotes an important distinction from the assemblages
442 of the research participants, who have a complicated relationship with the rural idyll, and reject

outright its commodification and consumption; interpreting this as conversely risking over-development and therefore requiring protection. Nevertheless, the assemblages collide over a shared appreciation of environmental amenity value. The rejection of core assembled representations was articulated by a participant with regards to one of the magazines offered as conversation joggers. *'This calls itself My Cornwall but it's not our Cornwall'*. Core and peripheral productions of place may use similar symbolisms, but they draw on very different interpretive meanings.

We can imagine power as the extent to which participants feel able to shape the physical and ideational assemblages from which they are situated within, and draw from to mediate their worlds. When applied to the present and the past, power was most usually articulated as powerlessness, infused with fear, and anxiety about what is happening in the present and what risks continuing into the future. For example, *'power should come from people in Cornwall, not dictated from Westminster'*. For the most part fear echoes, reverberates and intertwines with frustration over a perceived inability to influence key decisions about Cornwall's future in both recent history and the present, which has engendered a highly anxious emotional response. Some use as symbolic markers the waste incinerator that central government had recently approved despite years of fierce local opposition, and the despondency associated with their failure to influence government policy. Failure to shape the physical environments alienated participants, separating them from UK wide social, cultural and political processes, whilst tightening the binding connections and relations of interiority around their assemblages of Cornwall. This has interesting resonances with the 'hollowing out' of the State, and the anti-democratising processes of privatisation and corporate interests (Jessop, 2002). Consequently the reaction to powerlessness generated its own energy, mobilising and strengthening the Cornish assemblage, reinterpreting culture as a part of a move to a more resilient future, discussed above and below.

Participants articulated things that mattered to them. Some things touched a nerve, generating disproportionate affective impacts which rippled and amplified through later discussions (such as regarding planning), whilst others were more ephemeral. But as with the case of culture and the environment, these emotive factors generated their own resonance machines of emotions, symbolisms, ideas and tropes, repeating, amplifying and sustaining specific knowledges through their capacity to affect participants. Power differentials are grounded in the phenomenological capacity of topics to resonate, and affect the individuals concerned. This was not about whether topics came from the most authoritative sources, but about whether topics could connect with an affective topography to which individuals and groups are embedded.

Insert Figure 1 here.

Spaces of Possibility and Becoming as tools for improving regional capacity?

We now need to consider how an alternative approach to power that is based on the agency within assemblages can improve peripheral development, and we can do this through spaces of possibility. Spaces of possibility represent the discursive places that allow new things and ideas to emerge (see Connolly 2002). If a structure is a repetition of a pattern, a space of possibility is the conditions through which that pattern can be overturned. This might be through looking at something in a different way, or from introducing something new. Alternatively, an outside event might create circumstances for making the shift which breaks down structural patterns. The more embedded and entrenched that a structure becomes, the deeper that its patterns are etched on social and political organisation. 'Becoming' is the future element of a thing, and relates to 'what something will become' (see Bergson, 2004). In a space of possibility, 'becoming' is the potentiality that the structure has for becoming something new.

495

496 Currently, peripheries are not imagined as being able to shape their becoming, or create their own
497 spaces of possibility (Eriksson 2008; Jansson 2003; Bürk, Kühn and Sommer 2012). We see this as a
498 tension in the Citizens Takeover ~~data~~material. On the one hand, the powerlessness which emerged
499 as a key theme suggests a *lack* of becoming, or a lack of the capacity to shape one's own future.
500 Indeed, powerlessness had a deep attachment to and resonance with ~~;~~ governance, indicating a
501 ~~percieved~~perceived inability to shape the local landscape. However, alongside this evident *political*
502 powerlessness, participants displayed a strong capacity to shape the discursive environment.
503 Consequently, culture becomes reinterpreted to emphasise the qualities that exist in the cultural
504 repertoire which may be used to shape contemporary development and plans for the future. We
505 noted above the reference to Cornish '*independence of spirit*', which was combined elsewhere with
506 the global interconnectedness provided by mining, the historic shipping industry and Cornwall's role
507 in hosting major telecommunications and satellite stations at Porthcurno and Goonhilly. These
508 appeals to the past and real or imagined greatness provide a kind of map as a means to negotiate an
509 uncertain present, in order to arrive at a better future (Bergson, 2004). It is infused with a sense of
510 'becoming' that challenges the otherness and backwardness of core representations (Willett 2016.
511 Also see Eriksson, 2008), creating a space of possibility based on this capacity.

512

513 But in order to become something new, ideas and becoming need to be energised. There were
514 some things that the Citizens Manifesto participants were so unenthused by that they did not talk
515 about them. But as we have seen, there are other phenomena which participants cared about,
516 wanted to talk about, and more importantly, wanted to *do* something about. The strength of
517 resonance and power of affect mobilised people from passive respondents to energised actors. This
518 suggests something about the power of identity, not just in producing the cultural landscape of a
519 region, or even challenging stigmatising productions of place, but also for creating change within a
520 region or space. This is fundamentally different from, but also complementary to using identity as a

marketing tool (Hilpert, 2006), or by trying to create endogenous growth through developing social capital within communities (Dargan and Shucksmith 2008; Rodriguez-Pose and Crescenzi 2008; Atterton 2007; Lee et al. 2005; Shortall 2004; Murdoch et al. 2003). To a degree, this is a proposal for a more deeply endogenous model than these, which can tend to be about improving what 'other' people feel is instrumentally lacking in a location. This is not about a 'hands off' approach to development. Communities need resources and support in order to facilitate and actualise the energy that they contain. The task for regional development is to find the things that people are energised by, and use this to create new the spaces of possibility. Perhaps an example might be how culture energised and mobilised the Cornish campaign for EU structural funding (Willett, 2013). In this case, the dynamism and passion that people felt for their identity was used as a way of creating regional visibility on a much bigger platform, which has created its own sets of spaces of possibility. The challenge for regional development is to help to facilitate the spaces whereby the most affective matters can be explored.

Conclusion

We sought to know more about how power operates in the way that peripheries become discursively produced, and to explore how agency operates in the discursive construction and perception of peripheral regions. From the case study we see clear signs of a sense of disempowerment – but this is in terms of political *structures*, rather than in discourse. Participants had little difficulty describing their own interpretation of Cornwall, could construct their own symbolisms and meanings, subvert or reject core perceptions, and had an overwhelming sense of pride and deep local identity embedded in rich and textured layers of cultural practices. The

problem is not that participants felt powerless to challenge how Cornwall was imagined, but that they felt powerless to influence *political* decisions that shape place. They found it difficult to actualise their discursive power because in systemic, structural terms, power has coagulated around the core (or at least, 'more-core') regions. National agenda's took precedence over local planning, and central government frequently over-ruled Cornwall Council decisions that went to appeal. Ongoing privatisation of public assets contributes to feelings of powerlessness over the capacity to physically shape local environments. Our solution is to reconceptualise power from a unidirectional perspective which invites notions of the 'powerful' and the 'powerless', towards an understanding of power as a networked multiplicity – or assemblage. Following from this, our solution in a highly centralised political system would be find better ways of influencing core assemblages and perceptions, finding more effective ways to take the lead in the co-production of regional knowledges. This can be done by finding the topics, stories, memes, memories and meanings that generate deeply amplificatory affects, energise local communities, and can challenge stigmatising perceptions.

What does this mean for analyses of the discursive production of peripheries? The discursive construction of place and internal othering from a model drawn from Foucault and Said is an excellent starting point and raises important questions about the economic implications of such processes (see Eriksson 2008; Jansson 2003). We see this paper as a complement to existing material which considers the effects of peripheral representation (Bürk, Kühn and Sommer, 2012). But if we use an alternative model of power drawn from Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages, we can take a more nuanced look at this process by incorporating the phenomenological processes behind symbolisms, resonance and becoming. This accepts individuals (and peripheries) as active agents who can shape the socio-cultural production of the spaces within which they reside (see Lefebvre 1991; Massey 2005; Thrift 2008; Hetherington 2008). This transforms peripheries from passive victims at the mercy of powerful organisations and bodies, to active agents who can be, and should

be, involved, imagined and incorporated into the discursive process. As regional analysts, we need to understand the nuances and subtleties underneath the resonance of symbolic markers, and we need to be exploring how these markers can be best utilised within the regional development process.

A wealth of scholarship links identity to regional development (Bosworth and Willett 2011; Vepsäläinen and Pitkänen 2010; Galani-Moutafi 2013; Bryce 2012, Eriksson 2008; Murdoch and Lowe 2003), and indeed in Cornwall some important structural changes have been won through mobilising identity – for example, through the hard fought campaign to access the highest levels of EU structural funding (Willett, 2013). In other words, the ways that a place is talked about can at one and the same time deem a place as worthy of investment, generate emotions and feelings which can galvanise challenges to dominant narratives, and motivate people and groups into action. This is not about adopting a hands-off approach to development, but about helping to create the spaces where change can happen. This is a space where the discursive can co-constitute the political. Understanding the articulations and reverberations within regional assemblages can help us to find practical, physical, and symbolic markers which can resonate within the space, galvanising individuals to action. The power of assemblages lies in their amplificatory affects. To use a language borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari, better knowledge of these affects can help to create spaces of possibility, where hopefully regions can find a way to overturn their peripheral status.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)
- Atterton, J. (2007) 'The Strength of Weak Ties': Social Networking by Business Owners in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. *European Society for Rural Sociology* 47 (3) pp. 229-247

599 Aula, P. and V. Harmaakorpi. (2008) An Innovative Milieu – A view on Regional Reputation Building;
600 Case Study of the Lahti Urban Region. *Regional Studies* 42 (4) pp. 528-523

601 Asheim, B. (2012) The Changing Role of Learning Regions in the Globalising Knowledge Economy.
602 *Regional Studies* 46 (8) pp. 993-1004

603 Becker, H. (1997) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Simon Schuster)

604 Bergson, H. (2004 [1908] *Matter and Memory* (Mineola: Dover Publications)

605 Bosworth, G. and J. Willett. (2011) Embeddedness or Escapism? Rural Perceptions and Economic
606 Development in Cornwall and Northumberland. *Sociologia Ruralis* 51 (2) pp. 195-214

607 Burdack, J., Nadler, R. and Michael Woods (2015): Rural Regions, Globalization and Regional
608 Responses: The Case of the Oberlausitz Region. In: Lang, T., Henn, S., Sgibnev, W., Ehrlich, K.:
609 Understanding Geographies of Polarization and Peripheralization. Basingstoke, pp. 323-339.

610 Bürk, T., Kühn, M. Kuhn and H. Sommer. (2012) Stigmatisation of Cities: The Vulnerability of Local
611 Identities. [Raumforschung und Raumordnung, 70\(4\): 337-347](#)~~Raumforsh Raumordn 70 pp. 337-347~~

612 Connolly, W. (2002) *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed (Theory Out of Bounds)* (Minneapolis:
613 University of Minnesota Press)

614 Connolly, W. (2008) *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Durham: Duke University Press)

615 Cosgrove, D. (1998) *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin
616 Press)

617 Cresswell, T. (1996) *In Place, Out of Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press)

618 Dargan, L. and M. Shucksmith (2008) Leader and Innovation. *Sociologia Ruralis* 48 (3) pp. 275-291

619 Deacon, B., D. Cole and G. Tregidga (2003) *Mebyon Kernow and Cornish Nationalism*. (Cardiff: Welsh
620 Academic Press)

621 Deacon, B. (2004) *Under Construction: Culture and Regional Formation in South-West England*.
622 *European Urban and Regional Studies* 11 (3) pp. 213–25

623 Delanda, M. (2011) *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London:
624 Continuum)

625 Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (2004) *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Continuum)
 626 Dickinson, R. (2008) *Changing Landscapes of Difference; Representations of Cornwall in Travel*
 627 *Writing*. Pp. 167-182. in P. Payton ed., *Cornish Studies Sixteen* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press)
 628 ERDF Convergence (2013) *2014–2020*. Available at www.erdconvergence.org.uk/post-2013
 629 [Accessed 19 November 2014].
 630 Eriksson, M. (2008) (Re)Producing A ‘Peripheral’ Region – Northern Sweden in the News. *Geografiska*
 631 *Annaler Series B* 90 (4) pp. 369-388.
 632 Fanon, F. (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks*. (London: Pluto Press)
 633 FSB Federation of Small Businesses. (2014) *The Voice Cornwall*. November/December 2014.
 634 Flick, U. (2006) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (3rd Edition) (London: Sage)
 635 Foucault, M. (1998) *The History of Sexuality Vol 1 – The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin)
 636 Giles, E., G. Bosworth and J. Willett (2013) *The Role of Local Perceptions in the Marketing of Rural*
 637 *Areas*. *Journal of Destination Marketing* 2 (1) 4-13.
 638 Gramsci, A. (1973) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart)
 639 Hale, A. (2001) *Representing the Cornish: Contesting Heritage Interpretation in Cornwall*. *Tourist*
 640 *Studies* 1 (2) 185-196
 641 Harvey, D. (2001) *Spaces of Capital: Towards A Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge).
 642 [Heras, M., Tabara, D. \(2014\) Lets Play Transformations! Performative Methods for Sustainability.](#)
 643 [Sustainability Science. 9 \(3\) 379-398.](#)
 644 Herrschel, T. (2010) *Growth and Innovation of Competitive Regions: The Role of Internal and*
 645 *External Connections*. *European Planning Studies* 18 (7) pp. 1169-1172.
 646 Herslund, L. (2012) *The Rural Creative Class: Counterurbanisation and Entrepreneurship in*
 647 *the Danish Countryside*. *Sociologia Ruralis* 52 (2) pp. 235-255
 648 Hetherington, K. (2008) *In Capitalism’s Eye: Cultural Spaces of the Commodity* (London: Routledge)
 649 Hilpert, U. (2006) *Knowledge in the Region: Development Based on Tradition, Culture and Change*.
 650 *European Planning Studies* 14 (5) pp. 581-599

651 [Hinchliffe, S., Levidow, L., Oreszcyn, S. \(2014\) Engaging Cooperative Research. Environment and](#)
652 [Planning A. 46 \(9\) 2080-2094.](#)
653 Hetherington, K. (2008) In Capitalism's Eye: Cultural Spaces of the Commodity (London: Routledge)
654 [Horton, J. \(2008\) *Postman Pat* and Me: Everyday Encounters with an Icon of Idyllic Rurality. Journal](#)
655 [of Rural Studies. 24 \(4\) 399-408.](#)–
656 Jansson, D. (2003) Internal Orientalism in America: W.J. Cash's The Mind of the South and the spatial
657 construction of American national identity. Political Geography 22 (3) 293-316
658 Jessop, B. (2002) The future of the capitalist state (Cambridge, MA: Polity)
659 Kitson, M., R. Martin and P. Tyler (2004) Regional Competitiveness: An Elusive Yet Key Concept?
660 Regional Studies 38 (9) pp. 991-999
661 Lang, T., Henn, S., Ehrlich, K., Sgibnev, W. (2015) Understanding New Geographies of Central and
662 Eastern Europe: Socio-Spatial Polarization and Peripheralization in a Rapidly Changing Region
663 (Palgrave Macmillian)
664 Lee, J., A. Arnason., A Nightingale and M. Shucksmith (2005) Networking: Social Capital and
665 Identities in European Rural Development. Sociologia Ruralis 45 (4) pp. 269-287
666 Lefebvre, H. (1974) Trans. Nicholdson Smith D (1991) The Production of Space (Oxford: Blackwell)
667 Massey, D. (2005) For Space (Sage: London)
668 Merleau-Ponty, M. (2012 [1945]) On the Phenomenology of Perception (Oxon: Routledge)
669 Murdoch, J. and P. Lowe (2003) The Preservationist Paradox: Modernism, Environmentalism, and the
670 Politics of Spatial Division. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 28 (3) pp. 318-332.
671 Murdoch, J., P. Lowe, N. Ward and T. Marsden (2003) The Differentiated Countryside (Abingdon:
672 Routledge)
673 Nietzsche, F. (2006). On the Genealogy of Morality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
674 NOMIS (2013) Labour Market Profile Cornwall. Available from:
675 <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157349/report.aspx?#ls> [Accessed 19 June 2013].

Orlu-Gul, M., Raimi-Abraham, B., Jamieson, E., Wei, L., Murray, M., Stawarz, K., Stegemann, S.,
Tuleu, C., & Smith, F. J. (2014) Public engagement workshop: How to improve medicines for older
people? *International Journal of Pharmaceutics*, 459, 65–69.

Pike, A., A. Rodriguez-Pose and J Tomaney. (2006) *Local and Regional Development* (Abingdon:
Routledge)

Rodriguez-Pose, A., and R. Crescenzi (2008) Research and Development, Spillovers, Innovation
Systems and the Genesis of Regional Growth in Europe. *Regional Studies* 42 (1) pp. 51-67

Said, E. (2003) *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books)

Sibley, D. (1995) *Geographies of Exclusion* (London: Routledge)

Shortall, S. (2004) Social or Economic Goals, Civic Inclusion or Exclusion? An Analysis of Rural
Development Theory and Practice. *Sociologia Ruralis* 44 (1) pp. 109-124

Soja, E. (1996) *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford:
Blackwell)

Thrift, N. (2008) *Non-Representational Theory: Space/Politics/Affect* (London: Routledge)

Vepsäläinen, M., K. Pitkänen (2010) Second Home Countryside. Representations of the Rural in
Finnish Popular Discourses. *Journal of Rural Studies* 26 pp. 194-204.

Willett, J. (2010) *Why is Cornwall So Poor? Narrative, Perception and Identity*. Unpublished PhD
thesis, Department of Politics, University of Exeter, June. Available from.
<http://eric.exeter.ac.uk/exeter/handle/10036/104835> [Accessed 12 June 2013].